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NOTES FROM ARMENIA,
IN ILLUSTRATION OF *The Golden Bough*.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, LL.D.

THE following Notes are the result of inquiries recently prosecuted by myself during a journey in Asia Minor. The matter which they contain is not necessarily new, and is necessarily slight, owing to my own inexperience as an explorer and folklorist, but a cairn is often built by the stones thrown by successive passers-by; and although the *Golden Bough* is itself a large cairn, and might be thought not to need augmenting, I venture to throw my little contribution on that already monumental "Heap of Witness." In reading Mr. Frazer's volumes, it is a temptation sometimes to think that the evidence is unduly in detail, and that the artistic presentation of the argument suffers from the defect of over-elaboration; but a closer knowledge of the matters discussed convinces one that while there is something to be said in favour of such a grouping and restricting of the evidence as would avoid unnecessary or misleading repetitions, it remains of the first importance that every kind of testimony should be collected even at the risk of repetition, for one never knows where the missing link in the evolution of a belief or of a custom may turn up amongst a series of apparently similar statements. Students of folklore know this so much better than I, that they will easily be able to tolerate my saying from a fresh point of view things which Mr. Frazer has already said from almost every coign of vantage in the whole outspread landscape of human history. And I will do my best to arrange the matters which I have to report so as to place

them in connection with what he has already elaborated in the *Golden Bough*.

The journey to which I refer took me by way of the Russian and Persian frontiers across the middle of Asia Minor to the Mediterranean. The route was in Russia by Batoum and Tiflis to Erivan, and thence to the Persian Frontier. Crossing the Araxes we went first to Khoi, and then across the mountains to Van; from Van by the south of Lake Van to Bitlis and Moush, and through the heart of Kurdistan to Palu and Harpoot. From Harpoot I visited Egin on the Upper Euphrates, and then struck westward to Malatia (the ancient Melitene), from thence southward over the mountains to Adiaman, and crossing the Euphrates at Samsat (the ancient Samosata) reached Ourfa (the ancient Edessa); from Ourfa westward, crossing the Euphrates at Biredjik, and so to Aintab (a few miles to the north of which lies the ancient Doliche, the seat of the worship of Jupiter Dolichenus), and then from Aintab to the sea-coast at Alexandretta.

The object of this journey was in the first instance the inspection of certain orphanages and industrial works for the oppressed Armenian people, in which I am interested. The journey, however, across wide tracts of country seldom visited by Europeans, and the close relation into which one was thrown with the native population, often furnished me with favourable situations for finding out at first hand some of the ancient customs and expiring beliefs of the civilisations of Western Asia.

I begin with the question of *Rain-charms*. The attempt to obtain rain, either for the immediate need or for the more remote need of a coming harvest, is one of the commonest and simplest cases of sympathetic magic. Such are the annual festivals of Adonis, Cybele, &c., and the popular customs of St. George's Day, May Day, &c. Most of the instances are regular calendar festivals, and a part of the established religion of the countries where they

occur. So we will begin with *periodical* religious attempts to secure rain.

Annual Rain-Charm.

Amongst the Armenian people it is the custom, on a particular day in the year, to throw water over one another. The day of this exercise is the Feast of the Transfiguration, and the festival itself is called by the name of Vartevan. Although in its modern form the custom of water-throwing is little more than a sport of boys, the evidence is abundant that the throwing of water was originally a religious exercise, and that it goes back to very early times.

Its religious character is attested by the fact that in the Armenian Churches there is an aspersion of the people by the priests on the Transfiguration festival; while the boys are throwing water out of doors the priests are throwing water indoors; and since the custom prevails all over the Armenian Churches and, as I shall presently point out, in the Syrian Churches also, we have sufficient evidence of the antiquity of the custom, apart from the folklore parallels and the illustrations drawn from other and ancient religions. We are, therefore, entitled to say that there was an ancient annual Rain-Festival, held on a given day in the summer, probably throughout Asia Minor. Now for some details.

The custom can be verified all over Armenia; we found it at Moush, at Pirvan,¹ at Egin,² at Harpoot, at Ourfa, and practically in every place where we made inquiry.

But in no place did they seem to know the meaning of the term *Vartevan*, and when questioned they offered false etymologies, connecting the word with the name Rose

¹ A village not far from Kebana Maden, an ancient mining town on the Euphrates, somewhat lower down than the junction of the Upper Euphrates with the Lower Euphrates or Murad Su.

² A much-desolated city on the Upper Euphrates.

(Arabic *ward*), which in my judgment were *nihil ad rem*.¹ Nor did they know that what they were doing was a rain-charm. In one or two places it seemed to have been confused with the charm *against* rain. Thus we were told that at Sivas, Erzeroum, and some other places, it was the custom to let a pigeon fly, *in remembrance of Noah*. This is not done at Egin, nor could we verify it in other places visited. At Aintab we found that they not only threw water over one another, but that they made a special point of throwing water upon the graves. At Egin, when they throw water, they say, "I didn't see you last Vartevan."

Upon inquiry from the Jacobite Syrians as to whether they had a Vartevan like the Armenians, the reply was in the affirmative, only they differed from the Armenians in keeping the custom upon the Feast of Pentecost instead of the Transfiguration. I think there is no doubt that the custom prevails throughout both the Churches named.

The more intelligent amongst the Armenians said that they thought the custom had come down to them from the worship of Anahid, which preceded their conversion to Christianity; others said that "our fathers did it when they were Fire Worshipers," but this may be only free speculation. With the assistance of a very small knowledge of history, it will be seen that, thus far, the parallel with the rain-charms of the *Golden Bough* is limited to the throwing of water. No parallel has been adduced to the drenching of an image, or of a human being dressed up to represent a tree-spirit or a corn-spirit, though human beings themselves are drenched; nor are there any signs of a sacrifice, animal or human, in connection with the charm. We shall, however, be able to make up the deficient matter when we

¹ Cf. Conybeare, *Key of Truth*, for the list of Armenian festivals perhaps as far back as 425, *Wardawarh*, i.e. Splendour-of-Roses or Rose-resplendent. This was an old Pagan festival of Anahid. On it, says Sahak, the congregations and married priests presented the first-fruits and best of the corn-crop. It was afterwards identified with the Feast of the Transfiguration.

come to the subject of occasional rain-charms, such as are used in times of drought.

Occasional Rain-charms.

The Turks have a rain-charm which consists of throwing pebbles into water. At Egin they gather pebbles and place them in two bags; in their extravagant way, they say that there must be 70,001 pebbles, of which I do not see the meaning. Over these pebbles they say some incantations. The bags are carried down to the Euphrates by two men and suspended in the water. This is done regularly at Egin in dry seasons.¹ At Ourfa the Turks carry stones to be blessed by the Hodja at the Mosque of Abraham. They then take the stones and throw them into the Pool of Abraham (Birket el Khalil), where the sacred fish are still kept and fed. This does not seem to vary much from the custom at Egin.

At Ourfa we came across a survival of the custom of throwing a man into the water; for we were told that in dry seasons they dig up the body of a recently buried Jew, abstract the head and throw it into the Pool of Abraham. We shall have another instance, later on, where the head of a sacrificial animal does duty for the whole body.

I come now to a rain-charm which is much nearer to the forms recorded in the *Golden Bough*, which appears to be very widely diffused.

At Egin, when rain is wanted, the boys take two sticks in the form of a cross, and with the addition of some old clothes and a cap they make a rain-dolly. This figure they carry round the town, and the people from the roofs of the houses throw water on it. They call the dolly the "Chi-chi Mama," which they interpret to mean "the drenched mother." As they carry the dolly about they ask, "What does Chi-chi mother want?" The reply is, "She wants wheat, boulgour" (cracked wheat), &c. "She wants

¹ [Cf. W. R. Paton in *Folk-Lore*, xii, 216 (June, 1901).—Ed.]

wheat in her bins, she wants bread on her bread-hooks, and she wants rain from God." The boys take up contributions at the rich houses.

At Ourfa the children, in times of drought, make a rain-bride, which they call Chinché-gelin. They say this means in Turkish "shovel-bride." They carry the bride about and say, "What does Chinché-gelin want?" "She wishes mercy from God; she wants offerings of lambs and rams." And the crowd responds, "Give, my God, give rain, give a flood." The rain-bride is then thrown into the water.

At Harpoot they make a man-doll and call it "Allah-potik." I cannot find out the meaning of the last half of this name. The doll is carried about with the question, "What does Allah-potik want?" "He wants rain from God; he wants bread from the cupboard; he wants meat from dish; he wants *boulgour* from bins; salt from the salt-cellar; money from the purse." Then they all cry out, "Give, my God, rain, a flood."

At Trebizond, as we were told, they make a rain-dolly. The children dress it up as a bride and veil its face. They ask money from the people. I was unable to find out whether the dolly was thrown into the sea, which is what one would expect from parallel cases.

Now, in reviewing these instances of annual or of occasional rain-charms, it will be seen that the Turkish charms are sharply divided from those practised by the Armenians and Syrians. They belong to different civilisations and to separate stages of human development. The parallel for the Turkish charms, where stones over which incantations have been said are deposited in a stream or pool, especially a sacred pool, as in the case of the Pool of Abraham at Ourfa, will be found in the cases collected in the *Golden Bough*, vol. i., pp. 109 *sqq.*, which are introduced by the following statement: "Stones are often supposed to possess the property of bringing on rain, provided they be dipped in water or sprinkled with it, or treated in

some other appropriate manner." Instances are given from New South Wales, Central Africa, and Mongolia. Our Turkish cases may now be added to these. The *Golden Bough* gives in connection with these charms the closely related one of water poured over the sacred stone, which leads naturally enough to the rain-charm in which water is poured over a sacred stone image, or in which the image itself is thrown into the water.

To return to the rain-charms reported from Ourfa, we have the singular case (I think it was Turkish) of the exhumation of a Jew, and the throwing of his head into the sacred pool. I was much puzzled over this custom, and do not even now feel able to elucidate it perfectly. The first thing, however, is to collect the parallels. Reference to *Golden Bough*, i., 99 sqq., will show a number of cases "where the rain-charm operates through the dead." For example, in New Caledonia they dig up a dead body and pour water over the skeleton.

In Russia until lately the peasants used to dig up the corpse of some one who had drunk himself to death and sink it in the nearest swamp or lake. An example is given from a village in the Tarashchausk district, where the body of a Raskolnik or Dissenter was dug up, beaten about the head with the exclamation, "Give us rain," while water is poured on the exhumed body through a sieve. Here, then, we have close and convincing parallels to the exhumation of the Edessan Jew. It remains to be seen whether there is any thought of substituting the dead Jew for a living one. All that I am prepared to say at present is that the Edessan parallel should be added to the cases in the *Golden Bough*.¹

Now turn to the Armenian and Syrian cases of water-throwing and of the drenching of the corn-dolly. Most of the cases which I have collected can be seen to belong to a common tradition. But the case of water-throwing at Aintab calls for special notice, because while, in the com-

¹ [Cf. also *Folk-Lore*, xi., 437, and xii., 101, 214.—ED.]

mon sport of the boys, it does not differ from the Vartevar elsewhere in the matter of throwing water on the graves, it is still a serious function. Here again the *Golden Bough* furnishes us with parallels, *e.g.* (i., 91), "We are told of the Baronga in S. E. Africa that in time of drought the women must, when they have cleansed the wells, go and pour water on the graves of their ancestors in the sacred grove."¹ From this it appears that the Aintab custom is not modern; it must have come down from a primitive rain-charm.

We come now to the ordinary usage of the Vartevar, and to the associated drenching of the rain-dolly. For the general illustration of water-throwing as a rain-charm, we might almost refer to *Golden Bough passim*.

Special cases of interest may be taken from *Golden Bough*, ii., 121: "We have seen that the custom of drenching with water a leaf-clad person, who undoubtedly personifies vegetation, is still resorted to in Europe for the express purpose of producing rain. Similarly the custom of throwing water on the last corn cut at harvest, or on the person who brings it home (a custom observed in Germany and France, and till quite lately in England and Scotland), is in some places practised with the avowed intent to procure rain for the next year's crops. Thus in Wallachia and amongst the Roumanians of Transylvania, when a girl is bringing home a crown made of the last ears of corn cut at harvest, all who meet her hasten to throw water on her, and two farm-servants are placed at the door for the purpose; for they believe that if this were not done the crops next year would perish from drought." And so on, in a number of similar parallels.

¹ Special attention is given to the graves of twins, who are called the children of the sky, and buried near a lake. Mr. Frazer says, "The reason for calling twins Children of the Sky is obscure. Are they supposed to stand in some mysterious way for the sun and moon?" Perhaps the Dioscuri will help to explain the matter.

It remains to discuss the question of the "rain-dolly," or "Chi-chi Mama," or whatever be its real name. This figure I take to be a corn-dolly minus the corn; in ordinary times the corn-maid or corn-mother is drenched at the time of harvest. Thus in the case previously quoted from Wallachia, the drenched maiden with the last ears of corn on her head, personifies the corn-spirit, and is drenched with a view to the next season. But the corn-spirit is also commonly represented in effigy, and this is the form which we have in the Armenian and Syrian rain-charm. It is simply the corn-mother or corn-child out of harvest time, and does not require a separate inventory except under the head of rain-charms. As an effigy it need not be regarded as anything new. When the effigy, as at Harpoot, is regarded as male, it stands for the spirit of vegetation in such forms as the "Green George," the King of the May, and the like. For this spirit may be regarded as either male or female; sometimes it appears as one and sometimes as the other. The drenching of the Harpoot rain-dolly is of the same class as the drowning of the Green Man and a host of similar practices, for which again see *Golden Bough* *passim*. What made it easy to use the drenched dolly in the *interim* manner required by seasons of drought is at once clear from the consideration that the effigy of the spirit of vegetation was commonly preserved throughout the year. It was thus always on hand to be treated as occasion might require. Cf. *Golden Bough*, ii., 133. "We shall see that the effigy of the corn-spirit, made at harvest, is often preserved till it is replaced by a new effigy at next year's harvest." The Armenian Chi-chi dolls are thus of peculiar interest, for, so far as I have yet inquired, there is no trace of the harvest-doll in Armenia. If there is, I have not found it. It survives from its occasional use in seasons of drought, though, unless I am mistaken, its regular use has been lost sight of. Perhaps a closer inquiry will bring the harvest-doll to light.

The Armenian Candlemas.

I now pass on to examine another important Armenian festival, which corresponds almost exactly to the Western Candlemas, and by contrast with the water-festival described above might perhaps be called a fire-festival. As is well known, the Western Candlemas is celebrated on February 2nd, and has the alternative title of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, on the ground that it is forty days after Christmas Day. But there is some reason to believe that the Purification of the Blessed Virgin is really a substitute for the Lupercalia, one of the last of the Roman festivals to disappear. If that were established the Purification has moved backwards in the calendar, for the Lupercalia properly belongs to February 15th. But then the festival of Christmas appears to have moved back from January 6th, which leaves us very nearly where we were before, for this would bring the Purification to February 14th. The Armenian Candlemas, however, is neither February 14th or 15th, but February 13/26, although as to this date, the duality of which is due to the uncorrected calendar, there is not a perfect agreement. Some said it was February 14/27. There is no doubt about its equivalence with our Western Candlemas. The *Golden Bough* is beforehand with us as to the customs which belong to the festival as the following extract will show.

"In the Armenian Church the sacred new fire is kindled not at Easter, but at Candlemas, that is, on the second of February, or on the eve of that Festival. The materials for the bonfire are piled in an open space near a church, and they are generally ignited by young couples who have been married within the year. However, it is the bishop or his vicar who lights the candles with which the young married pairs set fire to the pile. When the ceremony is over the people eagerly pick up charred sticks or ashes of the bonfire, and preserve them at home with a sort of superstitious veneration."—*Golden Bough*, ii., 249.

Our notes will show something more than the adoration and conservation of the New Fire.

In Moush, on the day in question, they burn wood, and from the smoke derive auguries of plenty or famine for the coming year. They keep the wood ashes and spread them on the fields to make them fruitful. They mix them with water and give the water to sick sheep; they spread them on the sheep to make them multiply. Bridegrooms and brides jump over the fire (this means young married people, not necessarily persons of quite recent marriage). The people burn their own bodies with the fire, which is reckoned to be holy.

At Pirvan they call the Candlemas festival *Moled* (which appears to be a Syriac word, and to mean either "birthday," or else to be a causative term for what brings to birth). They build bonfires on the roofs of the houses and dance round them, the new bridegrooms of the year taking the lead. They knew nothing about making any use of the ashes from the bonfires. Their explanation of the custom was that "it came down from the time when we were fire-worshippers." But this is their common explanation for peculiar customs. At Egin they light candles in the church and on the roofs of the houses, and every house where there has been a wedding in the previous year has a big bonfire on the roof; the new bridegrooms dance round the fire, and sometimes the brides dance round the fire also and jump over it. Children less than a year old are carried round the fire and songs are sung over them. Women belonging to houses where bonfires are made give away candles in church and elsewhere. They also give sweets. They do not make any use of the ashes from the bonfire.

At Ourfa the fire-festival is called *Meled*. There are bonfires everywhere—on roofs, in yards, &c. They call it the *Burning of Winter*.

From the foregoing, with the aid of the *Golden Bough*, it is easy to make parallels with other purificatory rites

belonging to the New Year or other leading festivals, and with the customs of carrying out Death, or carrying out Winter. (See *Golden Bough*, i., 208; ii., 70 *sqq.*, for the custom of carrying out Death, &c.)

There is one other fire-festival traces of which I came across. In the Syrian Church at Ourfa, on the night of the Nativity, they make a bonfire of vine stems in the middle of the church; the explanation which they give is that the fire is kindled in honour of the Magi, who were cold with their journey. This is quite an inadequate explanation of the cult. I do not, however, know the real explanation. It does not seem to be the same as the Candlemas fire.

Animal Sacrifices.

I now pass on to report a few noticeable survivals of animal sacrifice amongst the Armenians.

Mr. Conybeare, whose acquaintance with Armenian history and literature is of the first order, had advised me that such sacrifices were still extant amongst the Armenians, and I was interested to verify the matter for myself. In his *Key of Truth*, p. 115, note 4, he tells us that "the custom of offering victims in church and eating their flesh continues in Armenia and Georgia until to-day. Thus Gregory of Dathev, c. 1375, in his manual condemns the Mahometans because they refused to eat of the Armenian victims." In the same work, p. 134, note i., there is a long passage from Nerses Shnorhali, born c. 1100, and Armenian catholicos 1165, in defence of the custom of sacrificing animals in church in expiation of the sins of the dead. This sacrifice was called Matab, and was said to be for the repose of the dead. If I understand Nerses rightly, the sacrifice was to take place *at the door* of the church, the body of the animal being divided in the following order: (i.) the priests, (ii.) the poor and needy, (iii.) the friends of the offerer.

From a canon of St. Isaac (saec. iv.), quoted by Cony-

beare on the same page, we find that such sacrifices were offered on the leading ecclesiastical festivals. Mr. Conybeare also shows that this *matab* was repudiated by the Paulicians, as an animal sacrifice offered in expiation of the sins of the dead (*Key of Truth*, p. clxiv.).

At Archag, not far to the east of Lake Van, I took the opportunity of inquiring from the priests of the village with regard to this custom. They readily admitted the fact; the sacrifice occurred at leading festivals such as Easter, but especially, if I understood rightly, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin. The victims were usually lambs. Their blood was poured out upon the ground and the meat given to the poor. The sacrifice was not, however, performed in the church, but outside. They also informed me that it was done in remembrance of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham! This statement was confirmed to me elsewhere. I do not know whether there is a memory of human sacrifice lurking in the illustration.

At Egin I found these sacrifices were also made, but especially on the Festival of the Assumption of the Virgin (August 17th this year). They buy sheep from the church funds, collect *boulgour* (cracked wheat), &c., and on leaving the church each person has a piece of bread and meat given to him. The sacrifice does not occur inside the church; some people perform it at their own homes.

From Egin I learned that this festival of the Assumption was also a festival of first-fruits, and that before that time it was not lawful to eat of the new grapes. I did not gather that there was any expiation of the dead in the sacrifice referred to, but it is quite possible that my questions were not suited to elicit this fact, of which the Armenian literature quoted above furnishes decisive evidence. The impression made upon my own mind was that the custom was more like an early Christian *agapé*, and I see that Mr. Conybeare in one place makes a somewhat similar suggestion.

Sin-eating.

Probably there are few questions which have been more hotly debated by folklorists of late years than those which relate to the eating of the sins of a dead person by means of funeral victuals placed on his coffin or in contact with his corpse. The matter is discussed in Sidney Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, ii., 293 *sqq.*, and he sums up his inquiry as follows: "Thus in our own country we find the relics of a funeral feast, where food is placed upon the coffin, or rather upon the body itself, or handed across it, and where it is expressly believed that by the act of eating some properties of the dead are taken over by the eater." Some doubt has been thrown on part of the Welsh evidence which Hartland brings forward (see *Golden Bough*, iii., 18, note 3); and the case requires further investigation and the confirmation of parallels from other parts of the world.

My contribution to the subject is slight, but not uninteresting; I do not, however, wish to be understood to express a complete belief in the validity of Mr. Hartland's arguments, though they are powerfully reinforced by Frazer (*Golden Bough*, iii., 19). Some further confirmations would be welcome. I have alluded above to a visit which I paid to the Armenian village of Archag. Archag is one of those places that were most fearfully devastated in the massacres of 1896-1897, when for months the only living occupants of the village were the vultures and the dogs and wolves. On the occasion of my visit, I enjoyed with Dr. Reynolds of the American Mission at Van the privilege of Protestant preaching in the old Armenian Church (the preacher being the doctor and not myself). At the evening service, to my great surprise, I found that when the congregation dispersed, a corpse laid out for burial was lying in the midst of the building. It had, in fact, been brought in before we came, and was to lie in the church in preparation for burial next day. I noticed that two large flat

loaves of bread had been placed upon the body. Inquiry as to the meaning of this elicited no other explanation than that the bread was for the church mice and to keep them from eating the corpse. I did not feel satisfied with the explanation. Some months later, on mentioning the incident to some intelligent Armenians in Constantinople, they frankly admitted that in former days the custom was to eat the bread, dividing it up amongst the friends of the deceased. Whether this is a case of sin-eating I leave Mr. Frazer and Mr. Hartland to decide.

Foundation Sacrifice.

Much attention has been given in late years to the custom of establishing the security of a building or the prosperity of a city by means of a sacrifice offered on the foundation or immured in it. These vitalizations and re-vitalizations (for in the case of cities the sacrifice was often renewed annually) are attested for many ancient cities, such as Antioch of Syria, Laodicea of Syria, &c., where a primitive and annually repeated sacrifice of a virgin gave way, in course of time, to the sacrifice of an animal, such as a stag, offered on the birthday of the city. Of such sacrifices it is known that survivals still exist. Perhaps the most amusing survival is the case of the immuring of a live bee on the occasion of the consecration of a new bee-hive, a custom still in vogue in Bulgaria. (See Krauss, *Volks-glaube der Südslaven*, p. 160.)

By a happy accident I stumbled upon a case of foundation sacrifice just where one would have least expected it, viz. in the laying of a foundation of a new Protestant church at Mezreh near Harpoot. During the past summer this progressive step—for it must be clear to any unprejudiced observer in Armenia that Progress and Protestantism are bound up together—was taken by the people, and the American missionaries at Harpoot unwittingly took part in the sacrifice of the foundation. When the usual prayers

and addresses were over the builders sacrificed a lamb in the trench near the foundation stone which had been duly laid, decapitated the animal, and placed its head in the foundation of the building. I suppose we need not hesitate to say that this was a genuine survival from the time when human beings were immured or sacrificed. Has it also been pointed out that the coins which are commonly placed in the foundation are ransom-money for the victim who ought to be there?¹

Those who are interested in collecting the references to foundation sacrifices may like to have the following from the Arabic *Acts of John*. The Apostle John has legendary connection from the earliest time with a bath-house: *e.g.*, there is the story of his running out from a bath because Cerinthus the heretic was in it. The Arabic *Acts* make a similar connection of ideas between St. John and a bath-house, and tell us that "in this bath-house there was a Satanic power, which had dwelt in it *from the first, when it was built; because when the makers laid the foundation they dug in the middle of it and placed a living girl there and heaped up [the wall] over her and built stones for a foundation, and because of this the Satanic power dwelt there, &c.*

Offering of the First-fruits.

The *Golden Bough* has brought out very clearly the existence of a primitive sacrament of first-fruits among almost all peoples of the earth, and the influence of this sacrament upon later religions. The setting apart and

¹ For the foundation sacrifice we may compare *Golden Bough*, i., 292: "Not long ago there were still shadow-traders whose business was to provide architects with the shadows necessary for securing their walls. In these cases the measure of the shadow is looked upon as equivalent to the shadow itself, and to bury it is to bury the life or soul of the man who, deprived of it, must die. Thus the custom is a substitute for the old practice of immuring a living person in the walls, or crushing him under the foundation stone of a new building, in order to give strength and stability to the new structure."

sanctifying of such first-fruits is a religious rite of the first order, and "after partaking of the sanctified fruits, a man is himself sanctified for the whole year, and may immediately get in his crops" (*Golden Bough*, ii., 326, &c.). The custom commonly marks the beginning of a new year amongst the tribe that practises it, and is associated with the purification of the home and the production of the new fire. The custom will, however, vary both as to the time of the year when it is practised and in the manner in which it is carried out, according as the harvest is one of corn, wine, oil, or other products; and in the case of a vintage it may either be the first-fruits of the grapes or it may be the permission to drink the new wine of the year which has been produced from the new grapes.

Thus at Rome, if we may judge from the existence of two festivals by the name of Vinalia in the calendars, April 23rd and August 19th, there was a day in spring for the sanctifying of new wine and a day in autumn for the sanctifying of the ripening grape. (See Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, under *Vinalia*.)

It was my good fortune accidentally to light upon the Jacobite Syrian festival of the consecration of the grapes, and to take part in it. In passing through Adiaman I made the acquaintance of the priest of the old Syrian Church, and was invited by him to assist in the celebration of St. Thomas' day by reading a *sedra* at the Church service. This I consented to do, without reflecting that, even if I could decipher the Syriac of the hymn, I should be quite guiltless of the tune to which it ought to be sung. The result was, as might be expected, an ignominious breakdown, and the going up higher of a more worthy guest, who made the welkin ring with the praises of the apostle. In the course of the service I was surprised to see bunches of new grapes brought forward, offered on the altar with appropriate prayers, and then disintegrated and given, berry after berry, with small fragments of blessed bread,

to the individual worshippers. After the service it dawned upon me that we had been sanctifying the first-fruits, so I asked the priest whether it were unlawful to eat the grapes before St. Thomas' day. At first he evaded my question, but afterwards allowed that such was the case, but that since the advent of Protestantism the prohibition had become inoperative and the sanctification a matter of ridicule.

In order to satisfy myself with regard to this festival, I inquired of the Jacobite priests at Ourfa concerning the time when it was lawful to eat the new grapes. They replied at once that it was lawful on St. Thomas' day, and that on that day twelve new grapes were offered on the altar. The day of the consecration of the grapes, viz. St Thomas' day, was in their Church always the third day of Tammuz. I may mention that the church of Adiaman, of which I have spoken above, must have replaced a pagan sanctuary, for a pagan altar had recently been exhumed from the body of the church, and was now standing near the church door. Unfortunately there was no inscription to suggest the deity that had been replaced. It will be remembered that we have reported above that at Egin the first ripe grapes are sanctified on the Assumption of the Virgin. I suppose the ritual of this service has been published somewhere, though I do not know where, at this moment, to put my hand upon it.

The value of the observations made above lies in the suggestion that we have an actual feast of first-fruits, with its appropriate sacramental partaking of the fruits by the worshippers, incorporated with the service for St. Thomas' day in the Syrian Church, for we may use the language of *Golden Bough*, ii., 335, and say, "The solemn preparation for eating the new fruits, taken together with the danger supposed to be incurred by persons who partake of them without observing the prescribed ritual, suffices to prove that the new fruits are regarded as instinct with a divine

virtue, and consequently that the eating of them is a sacrament or communion."

Holy Trees.

There are a few minor matters that may be worth a passing reference. The existence of holy trees hardly needs to be further demonstrated; they have, however, an especial interest for me, in cases where I have recorded their existence, and none the less because my present dwelling-place (Selly Oak) is evidently the site of an ancient holy tree in England.¹

The first holy oak which I came across in Asia Minor was on the plain of Moush. Its living branches were hung with bits of rag in the conventional manner, it stood in a graveyard, and it was taboo. I found, upon inquiry, that no one would dare to make a fire from the wood, because it was holy.

Elsewhere there were traces of the holy thorn as a sacred tree. One such tree grows in a valley leading up to Harpoot. I watched a woman transfer a rag from her clothing to the tree, after which she threw a stone upon a neighbouring heap. The conjunction of the cairn and the tree was interesting.

Curious Customs connected with Childbirth.

At Egin I found some curious superstitions which can probably be paralleled elsewhere by those who have an acquaintance with the subject.

After a childbirth, and before the conventional forty days have elapsed, they put a pair of shears under the pillow. They say this is done to keep off certain evil spirits called 'Al, who would otherwise tear out the woman's liver. They also put an amulet with the shears. Sometimes the 'Al steals and changes the child. The child must not be taken out of the house during the forty days, unless it be protected

¹ It has left its name on one of the roads, Oak Tree Lane, and on the public-house (the Oak Tree) at the cross-roads.

by making the sign of the Cross over it. When a child is born, a piece of bread is said to be placed under its pillow.

These constitute the little sheaf of first-fruits of my observation which I have ventured to throw upon Mr. Frazer's heavily-laden harvest-wain. Some, knowing the directions in which I have recently been investigating, may perhaps wonder to find nothing on the subject of twins, either heavenly or earthly. The reason is that I am reserving some very interesting and important observations under this head for the second edition of my tract on the Dioscuri, if it should ever reach such a distinction.

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